# Hurricane Beryl Breaks Records in Caribbean, Highlighting Coral Reef Vulnerability



Hurricane Beryl, the first named hurricane of the year, has set several records as it battered Caribbean islands early in the hurricane season. Strengthening into a Category 5 storm on Monday night, Beryl pummeled St. Vincent and the Grenadines, causing significant damage and resulting in at least one casualty.

Beryl became the earliest Category 5 hurricane recorded in the Atlantic, intensifying from Category 1 to Category 4 within 24 hours, attributed to above-average sea surface temperatures.

Caribbean nations, vulnerable to such storms due to their geographic location, rely heavily on natural defenses like coral reefs. These reefs, which can reduce wave energy by over 90%, are crucial in mitigating flood damage. Studies show coral reefs help prevent billions in flood damage annually.

However, these reefs are rapidly declining, particularly in the warming waters of the Caribbean, due to factors such as climate change, coastal construction, and disease. The decline of coral reefs impacts their effectiveness in buffering coastal areas against increasingly intense hurricanes, exacerbated by climate change.